

109TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 44

Celebrating Black History Month.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 8, 2005

Mr. ALEXANDER (for himself and Mr. COLEMAN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

RESOLUTION

Celebrating Black History Month.

Whereas the first African Americans were brought forcibly to these shores as early as the 17th century;

Whereas African Americans were enslaved in the United States and subsequently faced the injustices of lynch mobs, segregation, and denial of basic, fundamental rights;

Whereas in spite of these injustices, African Americans have made significant contributions to the economic, educational, political, artistic, literary, scientific, and technological advancement of the United States;

Whereas in the face of these injustices Americans of all races distinguished themselves in their commitment to the ideals on which the United States was founded, and fought for the rights of African Americans;

Whereas the greatness of America is reflected in the contributions of African Americans in all walks of life throughout the history of the United States: in the writings of W.E.B. DuBois, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, and Alex Haley; in the music of Mahalia Jackson, Billie Holiday, and Duke Ellington; in the resolve of athletes such as Jackie Robinson and Muhammed Ali; in the vision of leaders such as Frederick Douglass, Thurgood Marshall, and Martin Luther King, Jr.; and in the bravery of those who stood on the front lines in the battle against oppression such as Harriet Tubman and Rosa Parks;

Whereas the United States of America was conceived, as stated in the Declaration of Independence, as a new nation dedicated to the proposition that “all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness”;

Whereas the actions of Americans of all races demonstrate their commitment to that proposition: actions such as those of Allan Pinkerton, Thomas Garrett, and the Rev. John Rankin who served as conductors on the Underground Railroad; actions such as those of Harriet Beecher Stowe, who shined a light on the injustices of slavery; actions such as those of President Abraham Lincoln, who issued the Emancipation Proclamation, and Senator Lyman Trumbull, who introduced the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States; actions such as those of President Lyndon B. Johnson, Chief Justice Earl Warren, Senator Mike Mansfield, and Senator Hubert Humphrey, who fought to end segregation and the denial of civil rights to African Americans; and the thou-

sands of Americans of all races who marched side-by-side with African Americans during the civil rights movement;

Whereas since its founding the United States has been an imperfect work in progress toward these noble goals;

Whereas American History is the story of a people regularly affirming high ideals, striving to reach them but often failing, and then struggling to come to terms with the disappointment of that failure before recommitting themselves to trying again;

Whereas from the beginning of our Nation the most conspicuous and persistent failure of Americans to reach our noble goals has been the enslavement of African Americans and the resulting racism;

Whereas the crime of lynching succeeded slavery as the ultimate expression of racism in the United States following Reconstruction;

Whereas the Federal Government failed to put an end to slavery until the ratification of the 13th Amendment in 1865, repeatedly failed to enact a federal anti-lynching law, and still struggles to deal with the evils of racism; and

Whereas the fact that 61 percent of African American 4th graders read at a below basic level and only 16 percent of native born African Americans have earned a Bachelor's degree; 50 percent of all new HIV cases are reported in African Americans; and the leading cause of death for African American males ages 15 to 34 is homicide demonstrates that the United States continues to struggle to reach the high ideal of equal opportunity for all Americans: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

1 (1) acknowledges the tragedies of slavery,
2 lynching, segregation, and condemns them as an in-
3 fringement on human liberty and equal opportunity
4 so that they will stand forever as a reminder of what
5 can happen when Americans fail to live up to their
6 noble goals;

7 (2) honors those Americans who during the
8 time of slavery, lynching, and segregation risked
9 their lives in the underground railway and in other
10 efforts to assist fugitive slaves and other African
11 Americans who might have been targets and victims
12 of lynch mobs and those who have stood beside Afri-
13 can Americans in the fight for equal opportunity
14 that continues to this day;

15 (3) reaffirms its commitment to the founding
16 principles of the United States of America that “all
17 Men are created equal, that they are endowed by
18 their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that
19 among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of
20 Happiness”; and

21 (4) commits itself to addressing those situations
22 in which the African American community struggles
23 with disparities in education, health care, and other

- 1 areas where the Federal Government can play a role
- 2 in improving conditions for all Americans.

